

**D**EALING  
SQUARELY  
WITH GOD

---

RALPH S. CUSHMAN

**OTHER BOOKS BY THE SAME AUTHOR**

---

**THE MESSAGE OF STEWARDSHIP**

**ADVENTURES IN STEWARDSHIP**

# DEALING SQUARELY WITH GOD

A STEWARDSHIP PRIMER

By  
RALPH S. CUSHMAN



THE ABINGDON PRESS  
NEW YORK

CINCINNATI

Copyright, 1927, by  
RALPH S. CUSHMAN

All rights reserved, including that of translation into  
foreign languages, including the Scandinavian

Printed in the United States of America



## CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
A FOREWORD.....	9
I. THE MONEY TEST OF RELIGION.....	13
II. GOD THE OWNER—MAN THE STEWARD...	28
III. IN ACKNOWLEDGMENT THEREOF.....	42
IV. IN LOVING LOYALTY.....	56



## A MESSAGE IN SEASON

ANYTHING from the pen of Ralph S. Cushman on the subject of Christian Stewardship brings a welcome message, not only to people of his own religious communion, but to disciples of Christ throughout our American Protestantism. This new utterance will be no exception. Doctor Cushman speaks not only with authority, having had intimate personal experience with all forms of stewardship work, and having given years of diligent study to its various phases, but he also speaks as one to whom this great ideal has become a ruling principle of life, in relation to God and in contact with his fellow-men. There is distinct and pressing need for such a "Primer" of Stewardship principles, and we shall immediately make large use of it in our Stewardship Department, particularly in those congregations where only a brief time can be given to such study, and a short and elementary course is all that can be undertaken.

LUTHER E. LOVEJOY,

Secretary of Stewardship Department, Methodist Episcopal Church.

Chicago, July, 1927.



## STEWARDSHIP PRIMER

### A FOREWORD

THIS little book is sent forth, in humble dress and abridged form, because of my desire to reach a larger number of the members of the church with the message that stewardship is Jesus' philosophy of life, and that the sincere acceptance of this gospel, *generally begins with an honest acknowledgment of the stewardship of our possessions—money, property, business and the like.*

I agree promptly that the stewardship of all life is the goal at which we are to aim. Indeed, the stewardship of money is a small item when compared with the stewardship of those spiritual resources which God has intrusted to us. But Jesus has told us a vital secret (at least a secret to the average Christian, I fear) when he said, "He who is faithful with a trifle is also faithful with a large trust" (Luke 16. 10—Moffatt). Then he partially explained by adding (in verse 11), "So if you are not faithful with dishonest mammon, how can you ever be trusted with true Riches?" (Moffatt).

Now, sometimes thoughtless persons speak of



the practice of tithing as a trifling matter. Very well, according to Jesus, "He who is faithful with a trifle is also faithful with a large trust." Let us broadcast this secret.

The publication of this little book is also prompted by another conviction. I believe that the best way to begin the study of stewardship lies alongside of the general outline of stewardship principles as adopted by many communions and as printed in paragraph seventy-one of the Methodist *Discipline*. This outline of the stewardship principles is printed on the following page.

The writer believes that one of the most helpful contributions made by him to this subject of stewardship came out during the days of the Methodist Centenary celebration and later was revised under the name of *The New Christian*. The treatment of the subject in that volume was merely an exposition of the various articles of the stewardship principles. One of my motives, therefore, in issuing this Stewardship Primer has been to save some of the more enduring portions of those chapters, and at the same time add some of my later reflections concerning the philosophy of stewardship. I am glad to acknowledge the generous permission of the Laymen's Missionary Movement which has enabled me to do this.

My prayer is that this little volume will help to stimulate the average member of our churches to a more careful study of the Scripture teachings of stewardship, for until we can build a stewardship church the kingdom of Christ cannot come.

## THE STEWARDSHIP CREED

The following are essentially the official principles of stewardship of several denominations and particularly of the Methodist Episcopal Church. See paragraph 71, *Discipline* of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

1. God is the sovereign owner of all things.
2. Man is a steward, and must give an account for all that is intrusted to him.
3. God's sovereign ownership and man's stewardship ought to be acknowledged.
4. This acknowledgment requires, as its material expression, the setting apart, as an act of worship, of a separated portion of income.
5. Biblical history records the setting apart of the tenth of income as that acknowledgment.
6. This separated portion ought to be systematically administered for the kingdom of God, and the balance treated as no less a trust.

## CHAPTER I

### THE MONEY TEST OF RELIGION

*"You can tell the sincerity of a man's interest in anything by the way he puts his money into it."*

It was an outspoken Kentucky physician who made the assertion. He was not a professing Christian. On the contrary, he was a severe critic of the church.

Now the ground of his criticism lay in the fact that he had met unpleasantly a number of stingy and, in his judgment, dishonest church members. Being naturally generous himself, he had strong convictions on the "money test." So out of his unfortunate experiences he proceeded to make the generalization that church members as a class are stingy and therefore hypocritical.

Thus he continued to reason until one day there came within his own horizon a young girl of heroic Christian spirit and simple devotion. With six others, this girl had joined in a covenant to pay one tenth of her income to the support of a struggling mission in the poorer part of a Kentucky city. It mattered not that her weekly wage was only three dollars and fifty cents. Nor did her faith waver because the in-

## 14 DEALING SQUARELY WITH GOD

come of her sick mother was pitifully small. God was calling and she followed the call.

But at the end of the very first week she was in trouble. No one had told her that it was the *first* tenth of income that was to be set apart as "the first fruits" unto the Lord. On Saturday afternoon she went home sorrowful. Her week's bills had been paid, but of the tenth there remained only a few pennies for the mission. In her grief she threw herself down on her bed and wept. But no comfort came until a little pet dog—her only luxury—jumped up, with great show of sympathy, upon her bed.

Then she remembered that a certain physician had made her a standing offer of twenty-five dollars for the pet. As she thought of it, a lump rose in her throat, and the struggle began in her heart. But the mission loomed large, and her covenant must not be broken. By night the physician owned the dog, and when the morning came, a young woman with a holy peace in her soul, and a glory in her face, laid the price of her sacrifice on the altar of the mission.

Years ago the great Master had witnessed a similar act of sacrificial devotion, and he had said, "Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her." And now it was not his will that the ac-



count of another young woman's devotion should be kept in a corner. Indeed, it was told in many a place, but in particular it came to the physician. It jarred him. Were there many more like her? Yes, there were six others who had made the same covenant! Then the physician pondered his philosophy, "You can tell the sincerity of a man's interest in anything by the way he puts his money into it." He was under conviction. A few nights later, when the young lady came home from her work, a happy dog met her at the door. Attached to his collar was an envelope containing a check for one hundred dollars! The Lord was at work in the physician's heart. A few weeks later the skeptic was converted, joined the Church of Christ, and became a loyal supporter of the mission. I have in my possession a photograph of that pet dog as he stood with the envelope attached to his neck. A perusal of the picture helps to prompt the question, Does religion have a money test? It certainly did for that Kentucky physician.

But to say that religion has a money test is to say that every life may be tested by money. I mean that our deeper motives are revealed by our attitude toward money and profits.

#### A MACEDONIAN EPISTLE

In the sixteenth chapter of the Acts of the

## 16 DEALING SQUARELY WITH GOD

Apostles is the story of Paul's vision of the Macedonian who was crying, "Come over into Macedonia, and help us." What the apostle might have said (if his soul had not been burning with the stewardship passion) is recorded by an anonymous writer. The letter is illuminating:

### TO THE MAN OF MACEDONIA:

DEAR SIR AND BROTHER:

Doubtless you recall the invitation you extended to me to come over into Macedonia and help the people of that section. You will pardon me for saying that I am somewhat surprised you should expect a man of my standing in the church seriously to consider a call on such meager information.

There are a number of things I would like to learn before giving you my decision, and I would appreciate it if you would drop me a line, addressing me at Troas.

First of all, I would like to know if Macedonia is a circuit or station. This is important, as I have been told that once a man begins on a circuit it is well-nigh impossible to secure employment in station work. If Macedonia embraces more than one preaching place, I may as well tell you frankly that I cannot think of accepting the call.

There is another important item that was overlooked in your brief and somewhat sudden invitation. No mention was made of the salary I should receive. While it is true that I am not preaching for money, there are certain things that need to be taken into account. I have been through a long and expensive course of training; in fact, I may say with pardonable pride that I am a Sanhedrin man—the only one in the ministry to-day.

The day is past when you may expect a man to rush into a new field without some idea of the support he is to receive. I have worked myself up to a good position in the Asiatic field, and to take a drop and lose my grade would be a serious matter.

Nor can I afford to swap "dollar for dollar," as the saying

is among us apostles. Kindly get the good Macedonian brethren together and see what you can do in the way of support. You have told me nothing about Macedonia beyond the implication that the place needs help. What are the social advantages? Is the church well organized?

I recently had a fine offer to return to Damascus at an increase in salary, and am told that I made a very favorable impression on the church at Jerusalem. If it will help with the board at Macedonia, you might mention these facts, and also some of the brethren in Judea have been heard to say that, if I keep on, in a few years I may have anything in the gift of the church. For recommendations, write to the Rev. Simon Peter, D.D., Jerusalem. I will say that I am a first-class mixer, and especially strong on argumentative preaching.

If I accept the call, I must stipulate for two months' vacation and the privilege of taking an occasional lecture tour.

My lecture on "Over the Wall in a Basket" is worth two drachmas of any man's money.

Sincerely yours,

PAUL OF TARSAUS.

Now, I can imagine a good many laymen laughing with glee after reading this epistle to the Macedonian. But why? Is this fictitious Paul of Tarsus revealing motives any different than the average business man reveals in his business—and without shame? Oh, but we expect higher motives in the ministry! So we do, thank God, but why not in the laymen? Why should the profit motive be the dominating factor in any man's life—in clergyman, physician, lawyer, or grocerman?

#### THE SCRIPTURES SAY SO

Now, both the Old Testament and New Testa-

## 18 DEALING SQUARELY WITH GOD

ment are emphatic in indorsing the revealing character of the money test. Meditate on just one sentence from the lips of Jesus. It is suggestive of many others: "If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?" (Luke 16. 11.) It would seem as if Jesus were saying, "Tell me how a church member gets his money and spends his money and I will tell you what kind of a Christian he is."

### COLD FIGURES ARE TALKING

If it is true, therefore, that you can tell the sincerity of a man's interest in religion by the way he puts his money into it, then what mean the frequently recurring statistics<sup>1</sup> which show that in the United States, supposedly

<sup>1</sup> The United Stewardship Council shows that in recent years the giving by all churches in the United States, for both local support and missionary operations, is approximately \$700,000,000. Compare this with the government figures for a recent year: For face powders, cosmetics, perfumeries, etc. \$750,000,000; for ice cream, soft drinks, and chewing gum \$650,000,000; for cigarettes, \$800,000,000; and for all other tobacco and snuff \$800,000,000 more.

The committee on education of the Rochester, New York, Chamber of Commerce recently showed that "in 1920 there was expended for luxuries in the United States \$17,361,000,000. There was expended for education in 1920 \$1,036,000,000."

A secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions of the Methodist Episcopal Church has issued the following dissection of the dollar that most people spend. The analysis is based on government figures:

"To living costs (rent, food, apparel), 24.5 cents; luxury, 22 cents; waste, 14 cents; miscellaneous, 13.5 cents; investments, 11 cents; crime, 8.5 cents; government, 4.5 cents; education, 1.5 cents; church, .75 of a cent."

among the foremost of Christian nations, a pitifully small percentage of the income of the people goes to the support of religion and worship? Ask all the questions that come to the mind: What percentage of Americans are church members? Do church people spend their full share for luxuries? Who gets the greater part of the income of America, those inside or outside of the church? Study all these questions carefully and you will finally be left with the conviction that there is a shameful discrepancy between the offering which the average church member makes to his luxuries and that which he makes to his church. The Methodist bishops seem to have been justified recently in appealing thus to their people: "In this hour of pressing need will not our people forego habits of luxurious personal expenditure?"

### EDUCATION IS NEEDED

What does all this mean? Doubtless one meaning is that we are too much lacking in the spirit which David showed when he said, "I will not offer unto the Lord that which costs me nothing." But there is another explanation, too. *It is that our congregations have not been educated concerning the vital relation between religion and money giving.* Doubtless we of the ministry are to blame for the failure, but, on the



other hand, if the minister shrinks from preaching on the money question, is it not because the laymen have made it known that the weak spot in their spiritual armor is the pocketbook?

I well remember in my early ministry in a city church in Massachusetts how the treasurer of the church came to the minister at the close of a morning sermon in which he had timidly referred to money-giving. Putting his hand affectionately on the preacher's shoulder, he said: "Pastor, will you let me give you some advice? I'm an older man than you are. Don't talk money from the pulpit. People will think that all you are after is their money. Don't do it."

Why should a minister not preach on "money"? Jesus did. Nevertheless, it was not easy for the minister to resist that kind of advice. But when the final business meeting of that fiscal year came, evidence was deduced that the church treasurer was wrong. It was likewise evident that great was the need of that particular church for education in the spiritual value of money-giving, for the treasurer arose and reported (as he had done for many a year!) the annual deficiency.

### THE MINISTER LEARNS A LESSON

Then happened something that not only led to new history in the life of that minister and of

that church, but it also revealed the fact that there are laymen who do believe in the preaching of the gospel of money-giving from the pulpit. As in former years the officials proceeded to make plans for the annual "agony Sunday," when the Lord of the heavens and the earth would be presented as a supplicant before an unbusinesslike and indifferent congregation.

It was more than the new pastor could endure. The fact that it was not a church of poor people added to his heartache. He arose to his feet. He tried to smile in the hope that it would soften the rebuke he felt in his heart. He said: "Brothers, it seems to me that this is a sorry business. The Sundays do not come often enough, that we should afford to spoil any one of them by what seems to me to be neither a dignified nor a worshipful performance. Has it occurred to you that any one of a half dozen of you men could pay this entire deficiency and hardly feel it? But the saddest part of it to me is, that we have been so unbusinesslike in conducting the Lord's business. If any one of you business men were to run your own affairs in the way we have been carrying on the Lord's business, you would fail in a short time, and you would deserve to. There is another side to this question that is even more vital; but, to say the least, is it not time that we gave to the Lord's business the same careful at-

tention that we plan to give and do give to our own?"

### A LAYMAN TURNS PREACHER

When the pastor sat down, there was a silence, until William W——, a banker, rose to his feet. The words that he spoke have never been forgotten by the pastor of that church. "It seems to me," he said, "that our minister has hit the nail on the head. I certainly think we ought to be ashamed that we have not conducted the Lord's affairs in a more businesslike manner." Hesitating a little, he continued: "I think it is only fair to add, in our own defense, that it is the fault of the pastors who have served this church."

The minister swallowed, and the banker went on. "I have been a member of this church for thirty years," he said, "and a member of this official board. I have been a fairly regular church attendant, but only twice during these years have I heard a sermon which made any reference whatever to the vital relation that exists between the paying of our money and the consecration of our lives to God." Then there was another hesitation. It was not in bitterness that he added: "And neither of those sermons was preached by our present pastor!"

Needless to say that minister went home to his "barrel" to look up his record upon this particu-

lar subject. Perhaps it proves that he is a good deal like other pastors, in that he has never been quite willing to admit that he deserved the rebuke of that evening. However, the truth dawned upon him that night that an occasional sermon on the value of giving (too often made futile by following it with a collection) would not educate a parish in the vital things of Christian giving. There must be a program and a permanent policy of education reaching into every organization of the church.

#### JESUS AND THE MONEY QUESTION

Jesus never dodged this money question. (It is just as true that he did not preach on stewardship just to swell the offering.) He was constantly educating. Many students of the Gospels declare that he had more to say about a man's attitude toward money and property than about any other one thing. In any case it is certainly significant that in sixteen of his thirty-eight parables Jesus has made this his theme. We ought to search out those passages of Scripture for ourselves and see that Jesus makes it perfectly clear that money-giving is both a way to and an expression of the consecration of life.

#### THE REVIVAL NEEDED

And the converse is also true. He also teaches that unconsecrated money is a deadly blight to

spiritual life. Jesus sorrowed over the rich young man not because he had great possessions but because the great possessions had him. "How difficult it is," he exclaimed, "for those who have money to enter into the Kingdom of God!" We ought not to fool ourselves into supposing that in this statement Jesus had in mind only rich men. Most rich men were once poor. Most poor men covet money. It is the money itch that Jesus is warning against. If the rich young man had only kept his money consecrated to God, back in the days when he *began* to prosper, it might have been different with him. "When a man begins to make money," someone has said, "God either gains a new fortune or loses a soul." And life is proof of this.

Does the church need a revival of religion? Here is the place to begin. As Bishop Berry once said, "I despair of any great revival of religion until the church gives up its sinful covetousness." I profoundly believe that money which belongs by every right to God but is held back from him by his professed followers constitutes the greatest hindrance to vital spiritual life that there is in the world to-day.

#### THE REASON FOR JESUS' EMPHASIS ON MONEY

It is evident that the reason for Jesus' emphasis on the money and property question lies



close to the fact that money is stored up life or personality. Money is the medium for which men exchange their abilities, ingenuity, and labor. When a man gives his money he is giving himself, and the way a man gives his money is the way he gives himself. This quotation from the late Dr. A. F. Schauffler makes clear what we mean: "My definition of money for my purpose is simply this: Money is myself. I am a laboring man, we will say, and can handle a pickaxe, and I hire myself out for a week at \$2 a day. At the close of the week I get \$12, and I put it in my pocket. What is that \$12? It is a week's worth of my muscle put into greenbacks and pocketed; that is, I have got a week's worth of myself in my pocket.

### "IS MY MONEY MYSELF?"

"Now, the moment you understand this, you begin to understand that money in your pocket is not merely silver and gold, but is something human, something that is instinct with power expended. Do you see what a blessed, what a solemn thing this giving is, this giving of my stored self to my Master?"

Another reason why the giving of money is a solemn responsibility is because it is a solemn thing to get money. Did I really earn it? Is it my own stored-up self; or am I in possession of

some other person's stored-up self? Here we come face to face with the growingly big question of the modern business world—the question of the stewardship of acquiring. Have I wealth that I did not earn?

Of course the complex problems of our modern industrial life make it difficult (perhaps comfortingly so!) to answer with exactness all these questions. But this very difficulty in actually knowing whether or not I have earned all I possess should increase in me the responsibility for the faithful stewardship of my possessions. I ought to be all the more careful to measure up to the acid test of the Christian expenditure of money. And this is the solemn matter that American Christians especially need to consider. How can there be any widespread revival of religion among us while church members, prosperous beyond all compare, are hesitating between a life of selfish indulgence and a life of sacrificial service? There is a way to change dead seas into living waters:

“I looked upon a sea  
And lo, 'twas dead,  
Although by Hermon's snows  
And Jordan fed.

“How came a fate so dire?  
The tale's soon told.  
All that it got it kept  
And fast did hold.

"All tributary streams  
Found here their grave,  
Because that sea received  
But never gave.

"O sea that's dead! teach me  
To know and feel  
That selfish grasp and greed  
My doom will seal.

"And help me, Lord, my best,  
Myself to give,  
That I may others bless  
And like thee live."

## CHAPTER II

### GOD THE OWNER—MAN THE STEWARD

So religion does have a money test! And it was so in the beginning. Jesus himself made this plain, but in doing so he simply reaffirmed the old principle, that a worshiper should not come before the Lord "with empty hands." Not that the Lord needs the gift so much as the worshiper needs to give! Christians must stop talking about "the collection," and emphasize the "worship of giving."

#### GIVING IS WORSHIP

The worship that is empty handed is, according to the Scriptures, simply not worship at all. The bringing of an offering to the altar of God is pictured in Scripture as a high and indispensable part of worship. Note carefully these three commands from the early days of Israel; the Lord Jehovah is speaking:

*None of you must appear before me empty-handed (Exodus 23. 16).*

*All the first-born belong to me, with the firstlings of your cattle. . . . And none of you must appear before me empty handed (Exodus 34.20).*

*Nor shall they appear before the Eternal empty handed; every man must offer what he can afford, according as the Eternal your God has made you prosper* (Deuteronomy 16.16—Moffatt's Translation).

#### THE NONSUBSCRIBER IS THE INACTIVE MEMBER

Anyone can test this truth that the nonsubscriber is a candidate for the inactive membership by studying the records of almost any church. A member needs to pay in order to belong. When he stops his regular giving he begins to backslide. Of course his name may be on the records, but he really is not there himself unless he is subscribing and paying. If we compare the list of inactive members with the list of nonpaying members, we learn much about the spiritual necessity of giving unto the Lord. Worship dies that comes with empty hands, and presently it will not come at all. One of the main reasons why we have such a large list of unassimilated members in all of our churches is because we have failed in the duty of teaching regular and proportionate giving as a necessary part of worship. How can a church grow strong which allows a large percentage of its members to go along from year to year without making any subscription to the budget, or regularly participating in the holy act of presenting unto the

## 30 DEALING SQUARELY WITH GOD

Lord "tithes and offerings"? The seriousness of the situation is indicated by the fact that within the last ten years we are told that the Methodist Episcopal Church has written off the names of 400,000 inactive members and the process seems to be going on at the rate of over 10,000 a year. Nor is this loss confined to any one denomination. Our church statisticians inform us that thirteen communions, having a total of 16,000,000 members, report an aggregate loss of 268,065 in 1926.

### TWO NEVER-TO-BE-FORGOTTEN PRINCIPLES

I. *God is the sovereign owner of all things.*

II. *Man is a steward and must account for that which is intrusted to him.*

Now, the demand of the Stewardship Creed, that every worshiper shall bring an offering, is based on two fundamental principles: (1) That a man is a steward of God; and (2) in bringing his gift in worship he is acknowledging *in real fashion* the ownership of Him who bestows all life and blessing.

### THE MEANING OF STEWARDSHIP

Oh that we could put reality into these two great principles! If only every church member could feel with the apostle Paul: "I have a stewardship intrusted to me!" "What hast thou that thou didst not receive?" As Doctor Cal-

kins has said, "To have is to owe," whether we are thinking of money or property, time or talents, or of life all in all. If we could burn this word "stewardship" into our lives, then there would come to us a new sense of the reality of a personal sovereign God, and with this reality there would come new purpose and passion into our churches.

Once upon a time Isaac Watts wrote:

"Most of us creep into the world  
And know no reason why we're born  
Save only to consume the corn,  
The flesh, the fish,  
And leave behind an empty dish."

The difference between most of us and Jesus is that he did know why he was born. Stewardship was his philosophy of life. His divine sense of mission was expressed in his first recorded words: "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" At the close of his days on earth he said to Pilate, "To this end was I born." We can sum up his life in the words, "Lo, I am come to do Thy will."

#### STEWARDSHIP IS SERVICE PLUS

A prominent American recently said that the biggest word in the English language is "service." He is wrong. A bigger word is "stewardship," for stewardship is service plus. Steward-

## 32 DEALING SQUARELY WITH GOD

ship is service plus—a sharing on the part of the servant of the mind of his Master. The good steward is the servant plus because he knows something of the plans of his Lord. Stewardship means mission, and it means more—it means heroic mission!

And Jesus teaches stewardship constantly and uses the word. Even as a child Jesus evidently felt himself to be the steward of his Father's business, of establishing the kingdom of God on earth. Indeed, I like to think that the boy Jesus had heard from the lips of his mother (perhaps in bedtime stories) the tales of the Old Testament stewards, and that this is why Jesus came to give so strong an emphasis to the words "steward" and "stewardship."

The outstanding fact about these faithful stewards of the Oriental world is that they were not only faithful servants but the trusted ambassadors of their masters. The steward was the confidential friend who knew the mind of his master and gave himself loyally to his master's most intimate plans.

### THE BEDTIME STORY

Take the servant of Abraham for instance. The intimate relation between the master and his steward is seen best by reference to that day when Abraham called his trusted servant and



friend into his presence, and commissioned him to go yonder across the desert, to find a wife for the young Prince Isaac.

There are few stories in the Old Testament that are more expressive of a sacred trust. Follow the steward as he starts out on his journey. He commends himself, from the beginning, to the providence of God. See him as at length he arrives, with his camel train, outside of the village at the village well. With what skill and prayerfulness he approaches the young Rebekah! And she responds to his carefully planned request for water.

“Yes, my lord. And I will draw for thy camels also.” It was the world he had prayed for, and his soul was glad. Any girl who would undertake to draw water for a train of camels would not be afraid of the hardships of a home!

A few minutes later we see the steward arriving at the home of Laban. The brother of Rebekah welcomes the stranger to his house. The camels are fed and the servants are cared for. And then the faithful steward of Abraham is called to the evening meal.

### MY STEWARDSHIP FIRST

But no, he will not eat—at least not until his story has been heard. He is tired and hungry, but he will not forget the stewardship intrusted

to him. The world will never forget his loyal words, "*I will not eat until I have told mine errand.*"

Then they listened. Those were trembling moments when Rebekah is told the mission of the steward, and asked to be the wife of the young Prince Isaac. Listen to the consent of the girl as she bows to what seems to be a call from God. That night the steward slept in peace.

A new chapter opens with the morning. Breakfast is over, and as the steward of Abraham rises from the meal he startles the whole household by saying, "And now send me back to my master."

No wonder that the household was in consternation. No wonder that the mother and brother protested. The proposed departure was altogether too sudden. Only yesterday they had come. It seemed no more than right that the departure should be delayed "at least a fortnight."

But again listen to the answer of the steward. There was just one big matter weighing on his mind—the sacred trust; he was on his master's business. "*Hinder me not,*" he said. "*Send me away that I may return to my Master. My stewardship first!*"

How much those words sound like that Scripture later spoken by our Lord, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?" Who

will say that it was not this old bedtime story, told by his mother, that later led Jesus to choose that Oriental word, "steward," re-coin it, and by it explain his philosophy of life?

The painful discrepancies between the Christianity of Jesus and the Christianity of most of his followers lie in the refusal to follow Jesus in his philosophy that the saving of life lies in the giving of life. The stewardship of Jesus must be perpetuated in the lives of his disciples if the kingdom of Christ is to come on earth.

#### THE BASIS OF STEWARDSHIP

But the basis of Christian stewardship is God's ownership. By creation and redemption we are his. Like a flash of illumination comes Doctor Moffatt's translation of Leviticus 25.23. Jehovah is saying to his Israel, "No land is to be sold in perpetuity, for the land is mine, and you are only guests of mine, passing wayfarers."

#### GUESTS OF GOD, PASSING WAYFARERS!

And Jesus, the Supreme Teacher, based his stewardship message on this solid foundation. It is God's ownership of all things and of all life that gives justice to his demand that men give an account of their stewardship.

We are stewards of God, whether we recognize it or not. The prodigal son was doubly a sinner

because he was wasting not his own but his father's substance (Luke 15). In the story of the unjust steward "a certain rich man," whose property is being wasted, is God (Luke 16). The householder who went out at dawn to hire workmen for his vineyard is another picture which Jesus draws of the Lord of all workmen (Matthew 20). Nor will we forget that parable of the supreme householder, the Lord of all the earth, who made a vineyard and "let it out to vinedressers" who should care for it (Matthew 21). There are other parables, like those of the talents, the pounds, and the rich fool, intended to underscore the big question, who owns the earth and all that is therein? God speaks truly when he says, "You are only guests of mine, passing wayfarers."

#### GOD OWNS, MAN OWES—A SUMMARY

1. *Therefore the recognition of God's sovereignty and man's stewardship is vital because it is the plain teaching of the Scripture.*

It ought to be seen that this is no secondary matter supported by a few proof texts scattered through the Bible, but here are great principles upon which Jesus founded his philosophy of life. We ought to go into the "original sources" and make these principles our own. The following Scriptures will help in this study:

## (a) GOD, THE MAKER, OWNER AND GIVER

Gen. 1. 1	Acts 14. 17
Deut. 10. 14	Deut. 8. 18
Psa. 24. 1	1 Chron. 29. 14
Psa. 50. 10-12	1 Cor. 4. 7
Hag. 2. 8	James 1. 17
Ezek. 18. 4	Matt. 6. 24-34
1 Cor. 6. 19, 20	Rom. 8. 31, 32
Acts 17. 24-28	

## (b) MAN, THE STEWARD

Gen. 1. 26-30	2 Cor. 8. 5-9
Psa. 8. 3-9	Rom. 14. 7-12
2 Pet. 1. 3, 4	Matt. 16. 27
1 Cor. 6. 19, 20	Rev. 20. 12, 13
1 Pet. 4. 10	Matt. 10. 8
1 Cor. 9. 16, 17	Acts 4. 32-35
1 Cor. 4. 1, 2	Luke 10. 29-37

*2. The recognition of the sovereignty of God and the stewardship of man is fundamental to much of the worship of the church and more especially to the essential teachings of the Scriptures.*

The study of the rituals of the various communions both in Protestantism and Roman Catholicism will reveal how extensively these twin truths have colored the service and ceremonies of the church. The offertory prayer, "All things come from thee, O Lord, and of thine own have we given thee," is an illustration. Many of the great prayers and standard hymns are full of references to these truths. What a revival of pure and powerful religion would be broadcast

if all those who use the ritual of the church would practice the teachings therein!

And it is still more important to realize that most of the essential doctrines of Christianity stand squarely on the double platform of God's sovereignty and man's accountability as a steward.

Take a single illustration; others will suggest themselves. The whole institution of Protestantism is built on the New Testament doctrine of salvation by faith (Gal. 2.16). Now, it is evident that there is a vital relation between this important doctrine and the principle of God's sovereign ownership. For as long as a man conceives of himself as absolute owner of anything, he may well think that he has something to give God as a covering for his sins. Only they who profoundly feel that God is sovereign owner of everything can come before the Father honestly praying,

"In my hand no price I bring;  
Simply to thy cross I cling."

*3. The recognition of the sovereignty of God and the stewardship of man helps us to think of God as a real and living Personality.*

Of course this is because of the vital relation between property and personality. The church is indebted for a clear discussion of this important subject to Doctor Harvey Reeves Calkins in

his classic work, *A Man and His Money*. "Ever since the earth's surface hardened into form there has been gold in the western part of Pike's Peak—as pure gold as was ever fashioned into a king's goblet. Property? Not until 1890. No one knew it was there." It was not property until it was related to some personality. Thus, where there is no personality there is no property.

Thus, it is evident that property suggests personality and personality suggests property. Consciously or unconsciously, we carry this thinking into the realm where God exists. And not to think of God as the sovereign owner of the things which he created and to which he has never relinquished sovereign title is to rob one of a personal God.

Many a man might come into a personal comradeship with the heavenly Father if he would learn to think of him as the owner of his bank account, his business and of all his possessions. There is no doubt that God is prevented from becoming real to those persons who will not let him come into that most real realm of life where we keep our material possessions. If we cannot make God a partner in our tangible relationships, why think of reaching reality in the intangible world of the spirit?

#### 4. *The recognition of the sovereignty of God*

*and the stewardship of man is the significant fact in the world of experience.*

One of the strangest facts of life is the blindness of most people to the swift and certain passing of the years. I do not mean that we should live in constant contemplation of the next world, although there is not much danger of this. Nevertheless, it is folly for one not to remember that life is a brief pilgrimage. Our possessions of to-day will be in the hands of someone else to-morrow. There are no pockets in a shroud.

Why, then, this grim "grappling for gold in greedy strife"? And it is not by the young alone, but by old men and women, who have no long expectation of continued existence here. How tragic was the folly of the rich fool! How big a fool he seems—to us—gathering unneeded treasure on earth when so soon he might hear, "This night thy soul shall be required of thee!" How understandable is Jesus' observation, "Then whose shall all these things be?"

Does not this blindness and folly spring from failure to see that God is the real final owner of all things? Man is only the steward of a few days. A great stewardship indeed, but nevertheless a try out!

"Time, like an ever-rolling stream,  
Bears all its sons away?"

God alone is the only changeless One in all ex-



perience. This is the point that came out of an incident in connection with a sermon preached by Bishop Edwin H. Hughes, a few years ago, at a missionary convention in the State of New York. The bishop says, "I preached from the text, 'Is it not lawful for me to do what I please with my own?'" When I was through I left the congregation paupers. The next day a rich man drove me out to his fine estate in the country. After we had gone over its splendid acres he turned to me and said, 'Dominie, does that place belong to me?' I said, 'Ask me that a hundred years from now and I will tell you whether it does or not!'"

The fact of divine ownership never changes—only the circumstances differ. One hundred years from to-night none of us will own any bank stock; the angel of death will pry open our hands; we will return unto God his own. God is the great Evictor. When we stand and sing, "We give thee but thine own," we are stating a solemn truth. God never signs any quit-claim deeds; He only says, "Another steward to test."

## CHAPTER III

### IN ACKNOWLEDGMENT THEREOF

"YES, I swear a little and you pray a little, and neither of us means anything by it." This retort which his profane neighbor gave the deacon when the latter came over to reprove him for swearing is not merely laughable; it is pathetically instructive. It stirs the conscience to ask, How much do we mean by our Christian profession?

How can the United States be called a Christian nation when we spend for a single luxury more than two times as much as all of the churches spend for their self-support together with all missionary operations at home and abroad? The total expenditure of the American churches in 1926, both Catholic and Protestant, was hardly \$700,000,000, while the tobacco bill in the United States was twice as large.

We do not claim that the amount spent for the immediate support of the church and its program represents the extent of the Christian giving in America, but certainly genuine Christian loyalty will be first evidenced in the support of the Christ's church, especially in a nation where

wealth has increased from seventy billions in 1920 to three hundred and fifty billions in 1925.

### THE WEAK SPOT IN OUR CHURCHES

"Tell me how a man spends his money and I will tell you what he is." Apply this modern proverb to the local membership of any of our churches. We report large numbers, but how many of these members are *regularly subscribing* to the support of the church and its program? Does anyone believe in the loyalty of a normal man to his wife and children unless he is paying regularly for their support? Does anyone believe in the good citizenship of an American unless he regularly pays his taxes? How can we believe that anyone really values his citizenship in the Church of Christ unless he subscribes to the budget and regularly lays down his offering as a high act of worship?

### THE GOSPEL OF SYSTEMATICS

A survey of the financial situation in most churches reveals two sorry facts: First a large proportion of the membership subscribes nothing to the budget. Second, a large part of those who do subscribe give little evidence of having followed the New Testament injunction, "Upon the first day of the week let *each one of you*<sup>1</sup> lay

---

<sup>1</sup> Italics the author's.

by him in store, *as he may prosper.*" A large proportion of our people seem to justify the accusation of "tipping the Lord," and even doing it with great irregularity.

The first big spiritual task before any church is to get *every* member to participate in the financial worship. Does a person really belong to an institution that he will not support with his material substance? A survey among the churches in a certain Eastern city reveals the fact that nowhere are more than eighty per cent of the church membership subscribing to the budget of the church, and in order to get these figures the membership have to be dealt with as families. The minimum figures reveal that in some churches as few as thirty-three per cent of the membership are subscribing and paying. It is probable that the average of Methodism is considerable under fifty per cent. Such figures give good ground for the statement that what the church needs is "not more of us but a better breed of us." It would be a good thing if every church would face this important matter and begin in the church school and with the young people to educate for a better condition of affairs. Now every real pastor is worried over these nongivers not primarily because the church needs their money but because they need to give regularly for their souls' sake—just as

they need to pray regularly and for the same reason. The habits of worship are what hold us when interest wanes. These nongivers have not merely repudiated their covenant to financially support the church and the Kingdom, but they are wandering away from God!

### EDUCATION IN HONESTY

Many of these nongivers might have been held to the Kingdom if we had educated them, both as children and adults, in the habit of dealing honestly with the Lord in money matters—*of honestly acknowledging his ownership of all material possessions*. Call it what you will—systematic giving, proportionate giving, “a separated portion” or tithing—every man needs to get a holy habit of regularly setting apart, as an act of worship, a definite portion of his income *as an acknowledgment of God’s ownership and as a confession of his purpose to be a faithful steward*.

We must stop quibbling about the New Testament authority for the tithe. Who cares anything about the tithe for its own sake! But there are some great principles behind it that we dare not overlook. For those who value system and method “tithing” has certainly proved a mighty good habit. But it is more than a good habit. It surely has taught many the A-B-C’s of

Christian stewardship because it has educated multitudes in the necessity of an honest acknowledgment of God's sovereign ownership.

#### IN ACKNOWLEDGMENT THEREOF

The key to a new spiritual glow in the Church of Christ lies right here. If we can make the word "acknowledgment" a burning flame of holy meaning, we can save the stewardship movement from degenerating into a meaningless tithing propaganda on the one hand, and from empty words and insincere profession on the other. Read carefully these two vital articles of the Stewardship Creed:

*3. God's sovereign ownership and man's stewardship ought to be acknowledged.*

*4. This acknowledgment requires as its material expression the setting apart, as an act of worship, of a separated portion of income.*

Let us face the issue frankly. It is bigger than systematic or even proportionate giving. It is making an honest acknowledgment of God's ownership. What is the trouble with the person who says: "Oh, I don't believe in this business of setting aside a portion of my income for God. Why, all that I have is the Lord's"? Just this: such persons are not honest! They may believe themselves honest, but they give evidence of the deceitfulness of the human heart. They have

never fallen in love with Jesus' words, "Not everyone that sayeth unto me, Lord, Lord, . . . but he that doeth the will of my Father."

### A HUMAN-INTEREST STORY

Here is an amusing illustration told the writer by an eyewitness. It happened some years ago in a Bible class in Ohio. Two long-time acquaintances came to a good-natured verbal combat. One of the men, who was teaching the class, emphasized the point that God's ownership and man's stewardship ought to be acknowledged by regularly setting apart at least one tenth of income. The member of the class who interrupted the argument had the reputation of holding his abundant resources with a strong grip. Perhaps this was the reason for the smile that went over the class as he said to the teacher, "But, Brother Tom, tithing may be all right for some of you who are not fully consecrated; but suppose a man has laid his all on the altar? How about that?"

"How about that?" replied the teacher, while the smiles broke into laughter. *"Well, if I were the Lord and you were the man, I would take ten per cent cash and call it square."*

### A CHECK ON HUMAN NATURE

It is quite evident what Doctor Gordon meant when he wrote: "Human nature cannot be trusted

to carry out its generous impulses. If I should succeed in winding any of you up to the determination to do generous things, you would run down again before next Sunday. That is what a solemn pledge to pay money to God amounts to—a ratchet to hold us up to the pitch we have reached.”

To the same point Dr. Harris F. Rall writes: “We do not give to God a fraction of what we possess, but we loyally acknowledge God’s sovereignty over the whole. Just now the church has no bigger need than to have Christian men face this question.”

And Dr. Robert E. Speer also argues for a definite portion of income as an expression of honest stewardship when he says, “We need some practical abiding principle like this to make sure that the principle of stewardship is a reality in our lives, and that we do not inwardly find ourselves swept into self-deception. It is the easiest thing in the world for a man who does not deal with God in the matter of obligation as he does with his fellows, to find that he has not been giving God his due.”

It would seem, therefore, that the most serious indictment to be brought against the persons who refuse to set aside a definite percentage of income for God, is that *they would acknowledge the property right of no other person than God*



*in this unbusinesslike and insincere fashion.* A Christian is indeed living under grace, but grace acknowledges the sovereign ownership of God.

### A JOY-BRINGING TAX

Of this Colonel E. W. Halford says, "The State has a method of exacting taxes if necessary to show that the ultimate sovereignty is with the government—going so far as to extinguish title if need be and prescribing limits of the use of possessions. God has a way of doing the same thing. Read the story of the king of Babylon in the Old Testament and of the rich fool in the New Testament. Men are aware of the processes of the State law, and are keen to pay their tax. They may be blind to God's processes."

"The Christian addition to stewardship is the joyful acceptance of it, and the pouring into it of all the glad content of partnership and of sonship to which the New Testament invites. Many men pay their tax to the State and then follow on and use themselves and their possessions with the glad abandon of patriotism, demonstrated so splendidly in the Great War. All Christian men and women, with hilarious joy, should enter into stewardship, and into partnership and sonship, with all that such relationship may connote. But to talk of this, without practical recognition and acknowledgment of God's sovereignty, by

the payment of a definite proportion of income and by the proper use of the remainder, is worse than nonsense.

### THE TEST OF LOYALTY

“Now, it is important that this fact of acknowledgment be fully considered. How is the sovereignty of the State acknowledged? You buy a piece of property, a home, for instance, and by virtue of a deed in fee simple you enjoy its possession so long as you continue to use it properly. But the State, through its agencies, places a valuation on your house, and assesses a certain tax upon it. This tax you must pay, or your possession is disturbed, and if you continue to avoid or evade payment, your title is finally revoked. No one questions this in the State; no one is more condemned than a tax-dodger. The tax paid the State is an acknowledgment of its sovereignty, an assurance of your loyalty, and a necessity to the State for the maintenance of its authority.”

It is unnecessary to continue the argument. Go where you will and into whatsoever form of business transaction, experience teaches that ownership must be acknowledged and that in the realm of material possession the only acknowledgment that really acknowledges is a material acknowledgment. If, then, you honestly

believe in the first article of the stewardship creed—that God is the sovereign owner of all—where can you find any good reason in nature or experience for not acknowledging such ownership in a material way?

### THE DANGER OF LEGALISM

There is danger, to be sure, that some proportionate givers or “tithers” may become legalistic. But I would like to warn those who, for this reason, hold back from putting “the separated portion” regularly upon the altar (if there really are any such), that there is a far greater danger from covetousness. I have known a few persons whom I suspected of paying tithes on Old Testament grounds and who were overcareful not to go beyond the tenth. But for every legalist of this kind I have known ninety-nine others who were bringing in the tithe for love’s sweet sake! And in this connection let us face this kindred question. Is it not true that for every person who refuses to tithe for fear of legalism there are ninety-nine others who refuse because of the love of money?

### A PAGE FROM THANKSGIVING ANN

I do not know of any story that more keenly compares the danger of legalism with the danger of covetousness and hypocrisy than does Kate Hamilton’s classic account of “Thanksgiving

Ann." It is the superb effort of an old colored woman to bring her mistress to see the unchristian character of spasmodic and unmethodical giving.

It all came about through the visit of a Bible missionary asking for contributions. We do not exactly accuse Mrs. Allyn of dishonesty when she says to the old colored servant: "The idea of counting up one's income and setting aside a fixed portion of it seems arbitrary and exacting; it is like a tax, and I think such a view of it ought by all means to be avoided. I like to give freely and gladly of what I have when the time comes."

#### SPASMS OF GENEROSITY

"I wouldn't like to be provided for dat way," declared Thanksgiving. "Was once, when I was a slave, 'fore I was de Lord's free woman. Ye see, I was a young no-'count gal, not worf think' much 'bout; so my ole massa he lef' me to take what happened when de time come. An' sometimes I happened to get a dress, an' sometimes a pair of ol' shoes; an' sometimes I didn't happen to get nuffin', and den I went barefoot; and dat's jist the way."

But Thanksgiving was not satisfied with the argument. The next day she planned a demonstration. Very late in the morning the mistress of the house found Thanksgiving sitting in the

doorway, and was not a little surprised also that no preparations for the noonday meal were under way. She asked, wonderingly: "What has happened, Thanksgiving? Haven't decided upon a fast, have you?"

It was just the question that the old colored servant was looking for. Promptly came the answer filled with emphasis: "Oh, no, honey; thought I'd give ye *what I happened to have when de time comes.*"

A little later when the gentleman and his wife sat down to a cold meat dinner, and scarce at that, the interior workings of Thanksgiving Ann's mind became evident. "What has happened, my dear?" said the gentleman, turning to his wife. "I sent home a choice roast this morning, and you have no potatoes, either."

"Laws, yes," spoke up Thanksgiving Ann, "but a body has to think about it a good while afore-hand to get a roast cooked, and just the same with taters; but *I thought I'd give you what I happened to have when de time come, and I didn't happen to have nuffin'.*"

"Has Thanksgiving suddenly lost her senses?" questioned the gentleman as the door closed after her. A little later the old woman returned with what was left of the basket of peaches, and with the second installment of her preachment. That morning the master of the house had brought in

some peaches. "Aren't those fine, Thanksgiving?" he had said. "Let the children have a few, if you think best; but give them to us for dinner."

"Sartain, I'll give you all dar is," she responded.

The children made free with the fruit that morning in an unusual manner, but it was all in the plan. When dinner time came the old woman composedly placed what was left in a fruit dish on the table, remarking gleefully, "Dat's all! De children eat a good many, and dey was used up one way an' 'nother. I'se sorry dar ain't no more; but I hope y'll 'joy what dar is, an' I 'wishes 'twas five times as much."

#### SYSTEMATICS WIN OUT

A look of sudden intelligence flashed into Mr. Allyn's eyes; he bit his lip for a moment, and then asked quietly, "Couldn't you have laid aside some for us, Thanksgiving?"

"Wall, dar now! s'pose I could," said the old servant, relenting at the tone. "B'lieve I will next time. Allers kind o' thought de folks things belonged to had de best right to 'em; but I'd heard givin' whatever happened to be on hand was so much freer an' lovin'er a way o' servin' dem ye love best, dat I thought I'd try it. But it does 'pear's if dey fared slim, an' 'spects I'll go back to de ole plan o' 'systematics'."

When Thanksgiving Ann was well out of the room, Mr. Allyn said to his wife:

"She is right, Fanny; it doesn't take much argument to show that. We call Christ our King and Master; believe that every blessing we have in this world is his direct gift; and all our hopes for the world to come are in him. We profess to be not our own, but his; to be journeying toward his royal city; and that his service is our chief business here; and yet, strangely enough, we provide lavishly for our own appareling, entertainment, and ease, and apportion nothing for the interests of his kingdom, or for the forwarding of his work; but leave that to any chance pence that may happen to be left after all our wants and fancies are gratified. It doesn't seem like very faithful or loving service."

#### MY STEWARDSHIP

From lust for gain or greed for gold,  
Keep me with high and holy mien;  
But if the ships of fortune bring  
Some precious cargo clear and clean,  
Safeguard me in my stewardship  
By glimpses of thy great Unseen.

From lust for place or pomp or power,  
Save me with pure and passionate pride,  
Curb not the hunger of my soul,  
But keep ambition sanctified.  
Safeguard thy steward, Lord, each day,  
By visions of thy higher way.—R. S. C.

## CHAPTER IV

### IN LOVING LOYALTY

#### THE TITHE ACKNOWLEDGMENT

5. *Biblical history records the setting apart of one tenth of income as that acknowledgment.*

6. *This separated portion ought to be systematically administered for the kingdom of God, and the balance treated as no less a trust.*

A few years ago a friend of mine was preaching to a gathering of colored laymen and ministers. It was a message on tithing stewardship. He used the words of Jesus, "These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." In the midst of the sermon the preacher was interrupted by a colored layman who insisted upon making a confession.

This is what he said. "While this here brother has been preachin' I've been decidin'. And I've promised God that hereafter he's going to have the tenth of all I get. But this ain't all. It's a confession I want to make. I've known about this here tithing business; I've known it was in the Bible, but I've been just like a lot of the rest of you—I've never faced it. Whenever I come to it, this is what I have done. I've just turned the



page or I've closed the book and said, 'Lord, that's too deep for me!'"

### FACING THE QUESTION

It would seem that the least that a Christian could do would be to stop dodging the question of the tithe. When a matter has been so deeply embedded in the religious history of so many nations, when it has been so conspicuously a part of Old Testament worship, and when so many good students of the New Testament practice it, can the Christian be really honest who dismisses it with a mere gesture of fair play? Was Chrysostom justified in saying: "Oh, what a shame, that what was no great matter among the Jews should be pretended to be among Christians! If they were in danger when omitting tithes, how much greater must the danger be now?"

### WHAT WAS BEHIND THE TITHE LAW?

I have no desire to make any argument that the old law of the tithe is binding upon Christians. It may be or it may not be. I have known good and earnest and scholarly persons to be on opposite sides of this question. There are even those who would wipe out the whole tithing matter by saying that the tithe of the Hebrew was merely a tax on the farmer and the

landholder. (Such critics could not have read Henry Lansdell's classic, *The Sacred Tenth*.)

Personally, I do not practice tithing because the Old Testament enjoined it. I am not interested in the legal side of the matter. But I am greatly interested in the moral and spiritual value of tithing. Even if we suppose that the law of the tithe is abolished in Christ, are there no lessons that the Almighty meant to teach by means of tithing which ought to be perpetuated?

May we not take it for granted, as a general proposition, that behind all Old Testament Scriptures there are principles of value for New Testament Christians? Paul said, "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning" (Romans 15.4). Now, as Doctor Fraser nicely shows in his essay "Suppose the Tithe Law is Repealed," the tithe law, like all the others of the Old Testament laws, was written aforetime for our learning.

My point is that though we may agree that the law of the tithe is gone, we cannot do away with the principle of the tithe. There were indeed certain things, like the "money test," like systematic and proportionate giving, like the great principle of acknowledgment, which the Almighty was trying to teach by way of the tithe. These lessons will surely help us to be better Christians.

## DOES CHRIST ASK LESS THAN THE LAW?

Moreover, we must remember that wherever an Old Testament law is done away with, it gives place to a bigger, higher, and more heroic practice. For instance, the Passover with the paschal lamb was abolished to give way for the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, commemorating, as it does, the Lamb of God, who alone can take away the sin of the world.

So, too, the Temple worship vanished to give place to a more spiritual and more universal worship. And, as Doctor Fraser points out, "if the tithe law was repealed, it was because it was not big enough. It was set aside to make way for something larger and not for something smaller." Shall we presume that under the gospel we may do less than others did under the law, or that our program of loyalty and worship shall be inferior to theirs? How can any man think that under Christ the great principles of worship, by orderly, proportionate giving, are to be superseded by spasmodic contributions and unmeasured benevolence? Above all, who dares to presume that the great principle of the honest acknowledgment of God's sovereign ownership and man's stewardship can ever or should ever be abolished?

It will be well at this point to review the third, fourth, and fifth great principles of the Chris-

## 60 DEALING SQUARELY WITH GOD

tian Stewardship Creed, the last of which is the especial text of this chapter:

3. *God's sovereign ownership and man's stewardship ought to be acknowledged.*

4. *This acknowledgment requires, as its material expression, the setting apart, as an act of worship, of a separated portion of income.*

5. *Biblical history records the setting apart of the tenth of income as that acknowledgment.*

### WHY I BELIEVE IN PAYING TITHES

I. *First of all, not because of any Old Testament, or even New Testament command, but because I am convinced that the Scriptures teach that every Christian should make an honest acknowledgment of God's ownership and Christ's lordship over all his material possessions. This is the Christian's pledge of allegiance and dependence, and this has been from the beginning the very heart of the principle of the tithe. We do not make God a mere gift of a fraction of our income, we pay the tithe in order to acknowledge his ownership of all. This great truth is not to be established by a few proof texts from the Scriptures; it is fundamental to all the teachings of the Word. God's ownership must be acknowledged in an honest fashion.*

II. *I believe in paying tithes because I am convinced that to deal honestly with God this ac-*

*knowledge must be made regularly as an act of worship.* This for me is just as vital as to pray regularly. To fail in this leads to the breaking of the commandment "Thou shalt not covet," and to the worship of mammon. Systematic giving as taught in both Old and New Testaments sprang from the principle of the tithe. When Paul said, "On the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store," he was standing squarely on the principle of the tithe.

III. *I believe in paying tithes because I am convinced by biblical history that an honest acknowledgment of God's ownership of my possessions requires the proportional paying of some definite portion of my income.* I am gripped by the fact that proportionate giving as taught in both the Old and New Testaments sprang also out of the principle of the tithe. If the tithe is not to be paid because it comes out of the Old Testament, then proportionate and systematic giving is to be avoided for the same reason. The idea that proportionate giving was born in the New Testament is unwarranted. In Deuteronomy we find, "Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the Lord thy God."

No haphazard giving has ever been considered worthy of an honest worshiper. Moreover,

Christians ought to be impressed by the historic fact that the practice of paying the tithe was not confined to the Hebrew nation, but was practically universal among the early people. Doctor Landsell in *The Sacred Tenth* (Vol. 1, p. 180) says, "It seems clear, then, in the light of revelation, and from the practice of, perhaps, all ancient nations, that the man who denies God's claim to a portion of the wealth that comes into his hands, is much akin to a spiritual anarchist."

IV. *I believe in paying tithes because I believe in holy habits as taught in Scripture and especially in the life of Jesus.* I believe habits make or break us; I believe habits send us to heaven or to hell. Indeed, so sure am I that a happy Christian life depends upon some four or five habits that if some person should come to me and say, "What must I do to have glad fellowship with Jesus Christ, here and hereafter?" I would prescribe some four or five holy habits, and among them I would say: Form the holy habit of setting apart a definite proportion of your money for the work of the Kingdom. Make it the first draft upon your income; set it aside with prayer; use it carefully as unto God. Have faith to begin with "at least the tenth." This habit will be for you a trusty thermometer, marking the temper of your spiritual life.

V. *I believe in tithe paying for some secondary*

reasons. *Man ought to do as much under the gospel as the Jews did under the law*, else, as Doctor Robert Speer remarks, "the motives of the gospel must be inferior to those of Judaism and paganism." The Christian is exhorted to "abound in this grace [of giving] also," says Dr. J. Campbell White. "How, by any possibility, could one 'abound' in the grace of giving, and yet give to God a smaller proportion than the Old Testament required? The strongest passage in the Bible on the enforcement of the tithe does not say anything directly about tithing. But it states a principle which applies to all the laws of God: 'For the law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death. For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and as an offering for sin, condemned sin in the flesh; that the requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.'"

VI. *I believe in tithe paying for the Christian because he faces no greater difficulty in paying the tenth of his income than did the Jew and the pagan.* "As a matter of fact," to quote again from Doctor Speer, "they did face greater difficulties than we." According to government estimates the average per capita income in America

is steadily increasing. There was a growth in savings bank deposits from 1912 to 1925 of from twelve billions to thirty-eight billion dollars. According to the United States Treasury Department, the increase had gone to forty-eight billion dollars in 1926. That the average man is getting his share of this increase is indicated by the fact that between 1912 and 1925 the increase in the number of depositors was from six to twenty millions. Moreover, in making a comparison of this kind, it must be remembered that the loyal Jew paid a second tithe in addition to the first, and every three years he paid another tithe for the relief of the poor.

VII. *I believe in paying of tithes by Christians because the need of money for Kingdom conquest is greater to-day than in Old Testament times.* God's world program was little developed or understood twenty centuries ago, and consequently the demand for support of a great missionary propaganda was not a factor in determining the proportion of giving then as it is to-day. It was many years ago that Bishop James M. Thoburn said, "The great, glaring denial of faith and duty which stands out before the world to-day, so clearly that it cannot be concealed, is the refusal of those who bear the name of Christ to execute the great commission which their Master has given them."



Recently I received the following paragraph from a district superintendent after he had made the rounds of his churches: "Somebody must get a real heartbreak over this pathetic missionary situation; it haunts me by day and by night. I hear the hard-luck stories in all of our churches, particularly the country and village church, and then I note the fine cars, the bountiful supply of food, good clothes, radios, and an abundance of books and magazines in the homes I visit, together with all other evidences of prosperity. And then I wonder just how much ground there is, in reality, for all this complaining of financial stringency. It seems to me it is not a cry for life's necessities, but, rather, a whine for more luxuries."

Quoting from Dean Charles R. Brown, of Yale University: "How the treasures of our church would be filled with the sinews of war for a more effective campaign against the forces of sin and want, did all professing Christians who are not clearly exempt begin to practice tithing. How the needs of our missionary societies at home and abroad would be met, their arms lengthened and strengthened for a mightier service, by this adequate support!"

VIII. *I believe in paying the tithe because the tithing stewardship program wherever intelligently tried has brought spiritual and financial*

*prosperity to the church.* There is a great volume of testimony on this point. Some of this has been brought together in the writer's book *Adventures in Stewardship* (The Methodist Book Concern). We have reached the period in the stewardship movement when in every section of the church there are to be found some societies who have proved beyond doubt the indisputable value of the tithing stewardship program. Recently the Board of Bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church gave this same testimony in the following appeal: "The early church began with a whole-hearted practice of Christian stewardship. The modern church cannot meet its glorious opportunity unless it follows the example of the early church. Wherever our people have begun tithing stewardship, the treasury for both local matters and general benevolence has been full. One of the Spring Conferences which reports a notable increase in its giving has accepted tithing as a Christian privilege and duty. This might easily be practiced all over the church. We therefore appeal to our people everywhere to become 'stewards of the manifold grace of God.' "

IX. *I believe in tithe-paying because the decision to pay the tithe has brought spiritual blessing to many individuals, even marking the beginning of new Christian experience.* "I think

every man will find," quoting again from Doctor Speer, "as every man who has passed through the experience can testify, that the acceptance of a principle like this marks a distinct era of a spiritual enlargement in his life. I am not speaking out of the air. I am speaking out of the experience of many in this room who look back to such time as marking the beginning of a new era in their lives."

"Thirty years ago," again quoting from Dean Charles R. Brown, "I was induced by a thoughtful layman in my first pastorate to inaugurate the habit of giving a tenth. My salary was only a thousand dollars a year and to give away one hundred of it seemed to make a big hole in it. But when the decision was once made I was amazed to find how much more I could give and did give than was the case when it was all left to mood and impulse.

"In all these thirty years I have never seen the day when I was tempted for a moment to return to the old spasmodic, haphazard method of giving to the Lord. We too have been blessed in this practice of systematic giving. There has seemed to be an overarching Providence all the way."

"Perhaps one of the reasons for this spiritual blessing and satisfaction which so often comes with an honest decision to practice tithing is due

to the fact that the tithe is a token of our surrender," said a western senator as he talked to a guest in his library, and as quoted by Doctor Calkins. "I never doubted the fact of God and the truth of his revelation. I think it is fair to say I lived a consistent Christian life, but it was not until I recognized God to be the actual owner of the property which I held that I understood the thrill of fellowship with God."

X. *I believe in tithe-paying finally because for most people the call to pay the tithe is a challenge to a more heroic faith.* Whether it be true or not that, with most professing Christians, business, pleasure, self, come first, and the church takes the last place, it certainly is true that when a man is called to become a tithing steward he is called to establish, as a life principle, the habit of putting God first. This helps to create a new breed of Christians, who put God and his church where they rightfully belong—first! It may be possible that in some hour of emotion a man will give out of his possessions or his life, to the point of sacrifice and suffering; but this spasmodic heroism pales before that everyday kind, based on Principle and Holy Habit.

The supreme call to Christian stewardship remains the same. It is the challenge of a patient Christ calling his disciples to a full consecration

of life and possessions for the Christian conquest of the world. It is not a renunciation, but a dedication. Christ waits that the church of this hour may catch the vision, and make the same heroic dedication that was made by those early heroes of the church, in order that it may be true of us as it was with them—"Not one of them said that aught of the things which he possessed was his own." We may well keep in mind Bishop Gore's statement, "In the beginning Christianity was kept at a high level by its being dangerous to be a Christian." Why not now?



